



Sonoma County, California
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Kraig Smith, RRFF member
Undated photo of Kraig landing a lake Rainbow near
Ennis, Montana (read his memoir, page 3.

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www.rrflyfisher.org

President's Message By Penelope Gadd-Coster

February was an incredible month. There were activities at the casting pond, Russian River fishing, the first meeting of the RRFF Women's Group, the Pleasanton Fly Fishing Show, and locally the Steelhead Festival at Lake Sonoma Hatchery.

The flows and sediment levels on the Russian River have been up and down during the few passing storms. But on those fishable days, wow, there was wonderful weather with nice temps and blue skies! There have been sightings of steelhead on our Club's namesake river. Let us know if you have seen or caught any steelhead recently. For that matter, let us

know about your fishing trips at the next General Meeting March 8, 2023. There will be time set aside before the raffle for you to tell us about your fly-fishing adventures.

Casting Pond—"Teach the Teachers" training on Feb 18th was headed up by our master caster and RRFF Casting Instruction Chairman, Steve Tubbs. I want to thank all of you for attending! This is a great program. I look forward to seeing some of you out there helping people learn and perfect their casting technique. And a reminder—not only can you improve your casting, but you can also improve how to set up your rod and reel—there is much to learn and it's so fun and educational.

Women's Group - Also on the 18th was the first *formal* meeting of our Women's Group. We talked about outings, how to improve our learning at the casting pond, and we decided to elect an Organizer who will be announced at the March General Meeting.



L to R: Patty Newland, Jodie Banovich, Leafa Fiore, Penelope Gadd-Coster, Catherine Miller. Women's Group at the pond.

Steelhead in the Classroom - I had the honor of working with an incredible team of people putting together fish tanks for the Steelhead in the Classroom Program (see *Karl Joost's* article in this month's newsletter). Karl Joost, RRFF Board Member and our SIC representative, organizes the program's volunteers and works closely with David Berman, Senior Programs Specialist in Water Education, the overall manager of the SIC program. They are a perfect team and have been working together year after year to create this successful and expanding educational program that is well received in our Sonoma County's school curriculum.

I helped deliver a tank to Washington Middle School in Cloverdale. I met with the teacher that will be working with her students to raise the steelhead eggs that will grow into alevin, and then into fry. After 6 weeks of development the steelhead fry will be released into tributaries of the Russian River. The Cloverdale Middle School teacher told me she wanted to do this because she had a student tell her later it was one of the best things he remembered about middle school—I loved hearing that!

The next General Meeting presentation will be in-house and about fly fishing Putah Creek. Read more about this month's speaker in Mike Borba's General

Meeting announcement below.

THANK YOU for your membership and I look forward to seeing you at our General Meetings, at the pond, and on a RRFF outing! Penelope



RRFF General Meeting Wednesday, March 8, 2023, 6:30 PM Lodge Room, SR Vets Memorial Building By Mike Borba

Richard Loft, owner of Napa Valley Fly Guides, will be our speaker in March. Richard is involved in conservation work for the Department of Fish and Wildlife's Heritage Trout Program and the Putah Creek Trout Organization. However, Richard is best known as the most enthusiastic guide on Putah Creek. His presentation, "Finding Your Way Around Putah Creek" will help you understand how to fish there more effectively.

Steelhead in the Classroom Tank Assembly Workshop By Karl Joost

We had a productive and fun production line! We assembled and completed 20 new insulated steelhead egg tanks to distribute to twenty new teachers who will participate in the Steelhead in the Classroom program.



L to R: Penelope Gadd-Coster, Lori Brendlinger, Ethan Rotman, Allen Espinos, Spencer Bader, Kraig Smith, Gregg Wrisley, Ed Barich, Dave Stone, & Karl Joost. Kneeling: David Berman.

I want to give a big shout-out to David Berman Senior Programs Specialist in Water Education, for leading the charge and supporting the SIC program along with Sonoma Water for allowing us to use their beautiful facility. And a thank you to CDFW for their authorization of the program and a special thanks to the Club I belong to, Russian River Fly Fishers, for their on-going financial support and the RRFF volunteers. And that goes for Redwood Empire Trout Unlimited too, for providing financial support for materials and providing their consistent group of volunteers.



Allen Espinosa and David Berman attaching Styrofoam insulation blocks to the outside of the glass steelhead egg tanks.

Our very own RRFF volunteers who showed up to help assemble the 20 steelhead tanks were: Allen Espinosa, Ed Barich, Gregg Wrisley, Kraig Smith, Spencer Bader, Dave Stone, and Penelope Gadd-Coster. We were all fortunate Tom Greer, RRFF Club member brought Stella, his frisky Shepard mix. Stella was a delight. We were all happy to have her amongst us while we worked or when we took breaks.



Spencer, Stella, and Penelope.

This is Why I Fish Memoir By Kraig Smith

Fishing has been one of the central themes of my life since age five. My grandfather would walk me down to Sausalito's waterfront to see how the fishermen were doing at the Trident pier. They usually had gunny sacks full of fish and this made quite an impression upon me. The fishermen's faces were weathered and worn like the planks that made up that pier. My grandfather's face was just as craggy.

I knew right then and there I wanted to be a fisherman. That was something I had to do. After much nagging on my part, I was finally allowed to fish. I remember the first tug on my line. I caught a small Perch, and that tug was like magic.

“Forever haunted by the water.”

As time went on, I expanded my fishing to the Marin Municipal Water District lakes that could be found in the watershed land of Mount Tamalpais and West Marin. At those lakes there was no fishing on Tuesdays because on that day they stocked the lakes with trout. One of those lakes was named Phoenix Lake, called *Cheese Point* by the locals where all the old men fished. It took me quite a while before I managed to catch my first trout on a salmon egg from a glass jar of Balls O' Fire packed by Pautzke. After that, my life had forever changed. I was now a graduate of *Cheese Point*. And the famous words of Norman Mclean, “Forever haunted by the water” applied to me. There was no going back now.

A friend of my father took his two sons and me backpacking one summer to Silver King Creek on the eastside of the Sierra. The fishing was unbelievable. The father of my friends got mad at us because we would not stop fishing. All we wanted to do was fish that creek because the fishing was so good. We didn't want to leave. He wanted to keep hiking to setup camp at a higher elevation. We won and stayed put.

For a time in my life, my family owned a summer home on the Russian River. The opportunity to fish was not lost upon me. During the summer, bass and bluegill were the main quarry. In the winter there were many dead lampreys and I tried to fish for steelhead without much success. My uncle fished for them using a heavy Pflueger level-wind reel. I did get an educated thumb out of the deal by watching him fish. After much effort and coaching from my uncle, I managed to catch one steelhead at the mouth of Fife Creek, a tributary to the Russian River with a Little Cleo spoon. I still love Little Cleo to this day.

Before my high school friends and I owned cars, we would hop the Northwestern Pacific Railroad from Schellville, near Sonoma, to Eureka through the Eel River canyon, then hitchhike up Hwy. 299 to the Trinity Alps' Hobo Gulch on the North Fork of the Trinity. At that time, the fishing was great. We were lucky to get back home in one piece after that trip. It was an exciting backpacking trip to remember.

When we finally did get cars, my buddy Dave Brooks and I went all over Northern California looking for spots to fish. My sister owned a ranch on the West Fork of the Carson River below the small town of Woodfords. She had about half a mile of river frontage down in the flats near the Nevada border. I fished there for almost twenty years. I had it all to myself—it was paradise. In the last few years, my fishing there went from ultra-light spinning to fly fishing. It was a great place to learn. I started my fly fishing at Petaluma Trap and Skeet on the Petaluma River where I met a couple guys who were fly fishermen. They tried to get me started. The learning curve was very steep, but there is something about fly fishing I could not let go of.

I continued with great difficulty for a long time, but never gave up. Success came slowly for me and finally in 2013, I went to visit a friend in Ennis, Montana and got some decent fish using my fly rod and reel. My casting and fishing skills slowly improved over the

years and my love of fly fishing has only grown as time goes on.



11-year-old Kraig fishing at Tides Wharf, Bodega Harbor.

Making a good cast in and of itself is extremely satisfying to me. When you are successful with your casting and fishing skills it seems to be for only a brief period. But when it happens, all the forces of the universe have aligned, and you exist in this state of perfection. This is why I fish.

Fly of the Month

Weedless Gurgler

By Mike Borba

I had a request to profile a frog pattern. While this fly is not specifically a frog pattern, by changing its colors from white to green or olive it will work as a frog pattern. This pattern has two advantages. First, it's easy to tie, and second it is very weedless. I've found that for top water bass flies the best combination of weedless and consistent hook ups comes from using a wide gap hook that rides hook point up.

Tying notes: Hook: extra wide gap worm hook such as Gamakatsu 58415 size 2/0.

Thread: 100 denier color to match fly color.

Tail: bucktail color to match fly color.

Flash material: (optional) matching color flash about.

Body: 1/8" sheet foam white for streamer or green/olive for frog. [Click](#) to see this fly in our website.

RRFF Fly Casting Clinics By Steve Tubbs

Our last RRFF Winter Fly Casting Clinic (before Daylight Savings Time begins) will be held on Saturday, March 4th, from noon until 2:30 PM (weather permitting). Our winter fly casting schedule will resume in November 2023 after Daylight Savings Time ends.

The RRFF Thursday Evening Fly Casting Clinics will begin on **Thursday, March 16th, from 4:30 until 7:00 PM.** They will be held every Thursday evening (weather permitting) until the end of Daylight Savings Time in November.



Steve Tubbs directing his "Teach the Teachers" group.

My thanks to the volunteer instructors who attended our "Teach the Teachers" clinic on Saturday, February 18th. We had about 12 RRFF volunteers who learned techniques for presenting and teaching fly casting skills as represented in the **GGACC Level 1 - Beginning Fly Casting** and the **FFI Fly Casting Skills Development Program's (FCSD) Foundation Level and Bronze Level** fly casting skills requirements. There were a few volunteers who were not able to attend this session so I will offer another opportunity to participate in our RRFF Fly Casting Instruction Program. If you would like to participate, please contact me if you haven't done so.

Learning to cast a fly line requires practice. Our volunteer instructors can help you with the basics,

but it is up to you to make these skills your own. Proficiency is a life-long process that will continually present new horizons if you choose to seek them. Come practice with us at the RRFF Casting Pond in Dan Galvin Park.



Steve with his "Teach the Teachers" group for a Q & A clinic.

Important Message

Karl Joost is looking for volunteers to deliver steelhead eggs to Sonoma County schools.

When: Wednesday, April 5, 2023, 10 AM (approx. 2-hour commitment).

Where: Meet at Sonoma Water, 404 Aviation Blvd., Santa Rosa, at 10 AM.

What: Help deliver steelhead eggs to Sonoma County classroom teachers.

Equipment: Bring a small cooler to keep the eggs cool during transport.

If you can volunteer, please reach me by [clicking here](#), leave a message and I'll quickly respond to your questions. Thank you, Karl Joost, RRFF Board Member.

Press Democrat 1989 Article Specific RRFF History By Mike Spurlock

An old Press Democrat article circa 1989 rescued from the pond container clean-up.

Editor: The following are excerpts from the original 1989 Press Democrat article titled, "A Club for Fly Fishermen to Hook Onto." By Brue Meadows, Press Democrat staff writer. Go to website and click on [Club](#)

[History and Founders](#). Scroll down to "1989" and click on "Press Democrat Article" to see the full text.

When the Russian River Fly Fishers Club was formed in 1976, the general idea was to "promote the enjoyment of fly fishing, to make more people aware so they might consider the approach to fishing," recalled Bob Sisson.

But unlike several other outdoor-oriented groups, the Russian River Fly Fishers have stayed true to their original purpose.

"It's not that we don't have strong belief and support conservation measures," said Sisson, who serves as pond captain for the club. "But that's not why this club was formed. I'm happy we've been able to maintain that feeling."

Individual members may involve themselves in other groups, but the club concept arrived at in 1976 is what you'll find 13 year later.

"It doesn't mean we're not concerned, but we're not activists," Sisson said. "We are a club for people who want to learn and improve as fly fishermen."

The club's roots go back to the summer of 1976, in Norm Sutcliffe's sporting goods store in downtown Santa Rosa, which served as a meeting place for local fly-fishing enthusiasts.

"It was initially Norm's idea," remembered Sisson, retired after longtime service as the Sonoma County director and vineyard advisor for the University of California Extension Department. "Up to that time, there was a hard-core group of people interested in fly fishing. Norm thought forming a club would help bring that group together as well as offering an opportunity for others to take part."

Sisson and Sutcliffe, along with Fred Pederson, Dr. Ted Olson, Bob Wray, Armin Herald, and Liz Flynn, thrashed out bylaws, announced an organizational meeting, then speculated on what might happen.

"Norm envisioned a small, exclusive club...maybe 25 or 30 members, but I had a feeling there were more people out there we didn't know about," Sisson said. "But we had about 90 people at that first meeting, and our initial roster included about 60 people."

The club roster grew to a high of about 300 in the early 1980s and there are currently about 225.

When it came to naming the club, some members wanted to keep it local and use Santa Rosa. "I'll take the blame for what we came up with," Sisson said. "I felt we had to make it regional...to appeal to a broader group."

The club is mostly male, although several families belong. And there are 15-20 women, noted Sisson, who would belong whether their families did or not. The club has rules but, according to Sisson, "it's a pretty unstructured, friendly atmosphere...We try to make it fun for people."

As the club grew, it became apparent a casting pond was necessary, especially for newcomers. Various farm ponds were considered, but nothing worked out.

Then, with then-president Liz Flynn and a wildlife artist Ben Cummings taking the lead, the idea of constructing a pond within the city gained momentum.

"Liz is a great organizer," Sisson said. "She made it a crusade."

In 1982, Cummings brought a proposal to Santa Rosa Recreation and Parks director Charles Hoefer. In effect, the club said: You provide the land, and we'll build the pond.

"The city council approved the idea," Sisson said.

Dan Galvin Park, adjacent to Bennett Valley Golf Course, was chosen as the site.

The club held two fund-raisers at the Luther Burbank Center, sweetening the treasury by \$65,000.

"I'd advise someone who wants to get a youngster interested in fishing to not necessarily start with fly fishing but take them somewhere they can catch a lot of fish easily," he said. "Once the kids are hooked on the sport, then you can introduce them to fly fishing."

"If you can dribble and chew gum at the same time, you can learn to fly fish." [End of edited article].

RRFF is anticipating the need to replace the pond liner down the road in the next 5-10 years, we are looking for information on who did the work on the last pond liner replacement in 2008 and/or who we might want to hire in the future. Any idea? Contact Mike Spurlock, [click here](#).

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Calendar of Events

Our next and last Saturday winter casting pond date will be March 4th, noon to 2:30 PM. During the winter, our casting pond is open on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays of each month—weather permitting. **See Steve Tubbs' article above on page 5 for the changeover to the spring/summer dates and times for the casting pond.** We are OPEN TO THE PUBLIC!

Beginners are welcome...

We have many RRFF outings coming up during 2023. To view the signup sheets for those RRFF Fly-fishing outings click below.

PLEASE FOLLOW ALL COVID-19 PROTOCOLS!

[Click](#) here for a complete list of upcoming fly-fishing outings for 2023

How to Contact Board of Directors & Coordinators

If you want to contact one or more of the Board of Directors and/or Coordinators below, then click on this link, which will bring you to our website.

[Click here.](#)

The names of our Board of Directors and Coordinators will appear. You may click on a name and leave a message for any person below and our website will send it to their personal email address, and they will respond to your message.



RRFF Board of Directors

President: **Penelope Gadd-Coster**

Vice President & Outings Coordinator: **Ed Barich**

Secretary: **Brendan Galten**

Treasurer, Membership: **Spencer Bader**

Webmaster: **Mike Spurlock**

Casting Instruction Chairman, Facebook: **Steve Tubbs**

Casting Instruction: **Don Shaw**

Membership Badges & Pond Steward: **Doug Mackay**

Raffle Coordinator: **Gregg Wisley**

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Steelhead in the Classroom: **Karl Joost**

Member at Large: **Tim Reuling**

Program Chair: **Mike Borba**

The Cast Newsletter Editor: **Dave Stone**

Member at Large: **Daniel Powers**

Coordinators

Day Fishers & Fly Tying: **Lee Soares**

Casting Pond Monitor: **Binky Castleberry**

Conservation Coordinator: **Charlie Schneider**

Conservation Coordinator: **Tom Greer**

Russian River Fly Fishers

c/o Spencer Bader
3310 Conifer Drive
Santa Rosa, CA 95404



Russian River Fly Fishers Membership Application

I acknowledge in this agreement, and fully understand, that it is a release of liability. I further acknowledge that I am waiving any right that I may have to bring legal action or to assert a claim against Russian River Fly Fishers (RRFF) for its negligence. Any member who invites a non-member (including member's spouse and family) agrees that such guest is bound by the same conditions and agrees to so advise the guest. I have read this statement and agree to its terms as a condition of my membership in the Russian River Fly Fishers. This agreement is valid for all RRFF sanctioned events, (fishing outings, picnics, meetings).

*Indicates required field.

*Name _____ *Date _____ *How did you hear about us? Referred by? _____

*Address _____ *City/State/Zip _____

*Preferred Phone: Home _____ or Cell _____ *E-mail _____

Occupation _____ *Signature _____

*Circle a (Yes or No): I'm applying as a new member Yes / No or I'm renewing my existing membership: Yes / No

Single membership - \$50 annual dues Junior membership (live >75 miles from Santa Rosa or age 16-18 - \$25 annual dues.)

Gold membership - \$1,000 (one-time) Family Membership - \$55 annual dues—List family members: _____

The club would like to help you meet your needs. How many years have you been fly fishing? _____

Circle any areas you want help with: I would like help learning or improving my cast. I would like advice on fishing equipment.

I would like a lesson in tying knots I would like a lesson in tying flies I would like to have an experienced member mentor me

on local waters or on a club outing. Any other areas not mentioned above? _____

*How are you planning to pay? _____

Note: Dues paid by a new member joining the RRFF after March 1st of any year will cover the balance of that year and the membership dues for the following fiscal year. The RRFF fiscal year runs from July 1st to June 30th. IF YOU PREFER, YOU MAY JOIN OR RENEW ONLINE at www.rrflyfisher.org
OR NEW MEMBERS, MAY MAIL THIS APPLICATION TO:

RUSSIAN RIVER FLY FISHERS, C/O SPENCER BADER, 3310 CONIFER DRIVE, SANTA ROSA, CA 95404